

Great Lakes Center: Review describes remarkably weak study of school cost and productivity

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Contacts

William J. Mathis: (802) 383-0058, wmathis@sover.net

Beth C. Rubin: (848) 932-0677, beth.rubin@gse.rutgers.edu

Great Lakes Center: (517) 203-2940, greatlakescenter@greatlakescenter.org

EAST LANSING, Mich. (October 11, 2018) — A recent report from the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty claims that Wisconsin does not get a good return on its educational investment. This study has been found to have overwhelming methodological shortcomings.

William J. Mathis, Managing Director of the National Education Policy Center at the University of Colorado Boulder, [reviewed](#) *Money for Nothing: The Relationship Between Various Types of School Spending and Academic Outcomes*.

The original report suggests that districts employ too many non-teachers, that per-pupil spending is not linked to higher outcomes, and that teacher pay makes no difference in test scores. Dr. Mathis' review points to critical errors in study design that fundamentally negate these conclusions. The report flounders in arguing causality from correlation and misinterpreting statistical significance as representing meaningful policy effects.

This leads to false or unsupported conclusions clouded by the omission of critical details that prevent replication or confirmation. Rife with undocumented policy claims, the results run contrary to the literature on spending, administrator effects,

and teacher effects. In fact, no literature review is provided at all, and the report fails to address the efficacy of interventions such as class size and early high-quality childhood education.

The off-point theoretical base, flawed assumptions and meager findings lead Mathis to conclude that the report earned its title, “money for nothing,” which could leave unsuspecting policymakers in dire straits if they were to use these findings to guide policy.

Find the review, by William J. Mathis, at:

<http://greatlakescenter.org/>

Find *Money for Nothing: The Relationship Between Various Types of School Spending and Academic Outcomes*, written by Will Flanders and published by the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, at:

<http://www.will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/mfn-final.pdf>

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